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IM PROPERTIES PUBLISH INAUGURAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

GWM ORA'S TEXTBOOK TEAM SUCCESS



INTERNATIONAL MOTORS HELP TO LAUNCH BYD BRAND







hat a period of time we are all living through! These last few editions of the IM Review have been compiled while the company has been dealing with the effects of a global pandemic, a war on the edges of Europe, global supply constraints, freight and shipping costs that have been spiralling out of control and a cost of living crisis significantly affecting basic items like food and fuel.

In addition to that, we have been managing far-reaching legislation such as the consumer duty initiative and continued FCA tightening which, though important and welcome, both add complexity to the management of our finance business. Our automotive business is in a multi-year transition as the motor industry in the UK and Europe continues its move towards EVs and other net-zero forms of transport. And our property business, in all its forms, has become committed to building more environmentally efficient buildings at a fast pace.

Part of me thinks it would be nice to have a year where there is stability and calm. But we're not going to get it any time soon. The ZEV Mandate in the UK is introduced in 2024, interest rates remain persistently high, affecting the housing market and the market for industrial buildings. We will have an election in the UK that promises to be very hard fought and perhaps even disruptive whether there is a change of government or not. Neither outcome looks like bringing stability, such are the UK's problems. And late in 2023, Israel was brutally attacked, elevating the tensions in the Middle East to even greater heights than previously seen.

That the group has been in a generally healthy state this year is testament to the hard work of our whole team plus the fact that being involved in three key sectors provides a good basis for long-term stability. That's what we focus on.

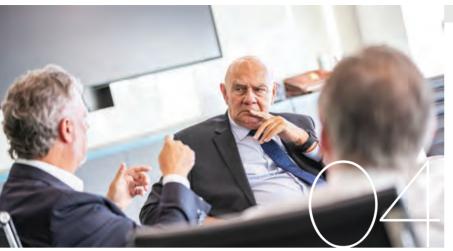
I once heard Tom Hanks, the actor, talk about things 'always coming to pass'. It's true. This period of time we are in will come to pass. The next period will have its own issues, no doubt. But for today, we must not be afraid of doing what we know is good and right. The challenges we are facing, as always, require a response.

This year's Review talks about many of the things that we are doing in response to what we see and feel. There is still tremendous opportunity and as a group we put a lot of effort into choosing which opportunities to pursue and working hard to make them successful. A perfect example



is our ORA businesses in the UK, Ireland and Nordic territories but there are others too. Winning through adversity is an age-old story. As humans, we love that story so much because it reflects life and how to best live it.

Andrew Edmiston



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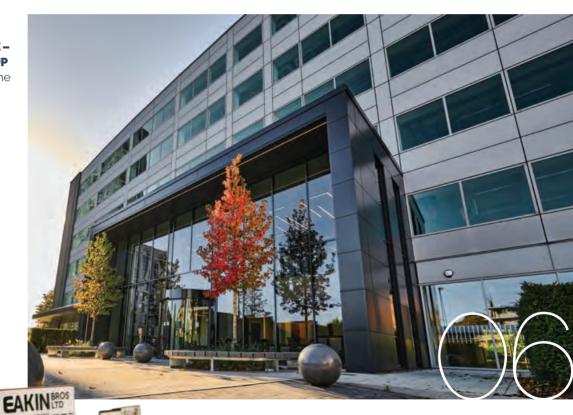
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#### /ithout a doubt 2023 will go

V V down as one the toughest years for the IM Group – but the counsel of the firm's three leading executives is... Don't panic! When Chairman, Lord Edmiston, Managing Director, Andrew Edmiston and Executive Director, Gary Hutton, sat down to discuss the state of the economy a number of themes quickly emerged.

All agreed that 2023 had been fraught with challenges. Most were beyond the control of anyone within the company. The effects of the Covid pandemic still lingered, interest rates marched everhigher for most of the year, the war in Ukraine sapped the



vitality of the world economy and more recently the terrible situation in Israel and Gaza hit global financial confidence.

"My view is yes, 2023 has been tough. But we have been through far worse." Interest rate hikes hit the profitability of IM's property divisions and car finance severely while the automotive business tended to be affected by exchange rates, which have been favourable this year.

"Our strengths – being agile, responding quickly, remaining honest and positive – means we face 2024 with optimism."

Lord Edmiston, who founded IM in May 1976, remains sanguine. "In some ways it was the worst time to launch a business. We'd just had the three-day week and interest rates rose to more than 15-percent just as our business was growing.

"We've weathered the sterling crisis when Britain pulled out of the ERM also the financial crisis that followed and the financial crash of 2008. So my view is yes, 2023 has been tough. But we have been through far worse."

Gary Hutton said the Group had huge strengths. "We've always been prudent and kept strong cash reserves because cash-is-king and that's allowed us to take advantages when opportunities arose." He points to some fantastic commercial property deals the firm made in the 2008 financial crisis when other firms were almost paralysed by the fear of investing.

All three agree that the diversification of the Group's businesses was a massive strength alongside the flexibility of the company and its people.

Andrew Edmiston explained that although profits were hit in 2023, it followed strong years of record profits. "People are what a company is founded on and our staff have always responded to challenges.

"Many things are beyond our control – no-one could have predicted the major events of the last couple of years that have shaken the world economy. But our strengths – being agile, responding quickly, remaining honest and positive – means we face 2024 with optimism."

Listening to financial pundits, says Lord Edmiston, is not always sound advice. "If I had done that – and I admit I don't always get it right – our business would never have grown. You have to be prepared to take risks in business when the time is right."

The IM Group started from nothing and is now one of Britain's most highly-respected multi-award-winning private companies employing around 500 people across the world.

"We've always been prudent and kept strong cash reserves because cashis-king and that's allowed us to take advantages when opportunities arose."







ctions speak louder than words, says the proverb. That's why IM Properties' first annual Sustainability Report is so important.

The highly-detailed 85page document is so much more than just reassuring words about how IM is looking towards a greener, cleaner and better future for the company, its employees and partners and communities it serves.

It clearly shows the actions the firm has taken, is taking and plans to take in the future with tangible targets. This moves the topic of sustainability on from an outline roadmap to a clear commitment to how sustainable futures is being achieved across the IM Group. Tim Wooldridge, IM Properties' Managing Director, explains: "As is the nature of our industry, many of our projects are often bound by long timescales. It is therefore especially important that we are designing and building for the challenges of tomorrow in the work we do today.

Tim Wooldridge





IM's target is that by 2030 all new developments will be net-zero ready and designed to meet net-zero operation.

"This report covers our firstyear's progress towards our 2030 goals to create a more sustainable business – one that supports our customers, supply chain and occupiers to advance their own sustainability behaviours.



"The work has been motivated by rising demand for a more sustainable approach to real estate and our own ambition to provide developments that are sustainable and fit for future needs."

IM's target is that by 2030 all new developments will be net-zero ready and designed to meet net-zero operation. The first, Mercia Park near Hinckley, has already been delivered. Bourn, a totally refurbished multi-storey office building in the centre of Coventry has also been completed as net-zero ready – action, not words!

As well as looking outwards, IM has also been looking at its own business and people. Again, targets have been clearly identified and a wide range of actions taken.

#### The company acknowledges that staff work, and feel, better if they are truly valued and listened to.

For example, an internal wellbeing strategy was agreed and an employee working group formed following an all-employees survey. That work is now going forward. The company acknowledges that staff work, and feel, better if they are truly valued and listened to.









By 2030 the IMP Education Programme will target in excess of 5,000 meaningful interactions.



In 2024 a wide-ranging wellbeing and events calendar will be introduced – further evidence of a company committed to its workforce.

# Spitfire's aim is that all of their new homes will be net-zeroready by 2030.

Giving back to the community is recognised as an element of sustainability. Staff have already successfully established a broad programme of voluntary work and are now being fully paid for giving up two days a year to help.



By 2030 the IMP Education Programme will target in excess of 5,000 meaningful interactions. Close to 600 student interactions had taken place by the end of 2022, and IM has become a regional partner in the Solutions for the Planet scheme.

Spitfire Homes are on track to deliver their first netzero-ready homes at their Fairmont site in Bishop's Cleeve, near Cheltenham, in 2025. Spitfire's aim is that all of their new homes will be net-zero-ready by 2030.



Huge reductions in carbon emissions throughout the lifecycle at all IM developments are targeted in a joint programme with IM and supply chain partners. By the end of 2022 around 42,000 tonnes of embodied CO<sub>2</sub>e had been saved by agreed innovations.

By 2030 IM will support the planting of 1-million trees – more than 125,000 already planted.









"We want to be recognised as valued community members and, indeed, builders of communities."

"Wherever we operate we want to be more than property developers, said Tim. "We want to be recognised as valued community members and, indeed, builders of communities. Our 2030 ambition is to create positive change where we work, benefiting communities through jobs, skills training and local investment."

Peddimore, IM's flagship industrial and logistics park in north Birmingham, is creating thousands of jobs and opportunities for local people. IM's Peddimore Community Fund has donated thousands of pounds to support local charities and groups to improve lives in the community. Up to £270,000 will be donated by the company while employees and the supply chain have put in 2,000 hours of volunteering.

Mercia Park, a showpiece business park in northwest Leicestershire, set new 'green' standards.

It was IM's first net-zero carbon in construction development. It's home to a huge Jaguar Land Rover and DSV warehouse complex. More than 3,000 jobs were created in an area that has since benefited from a wide-ranging social value programme. As at Peddimore, a Community Fund was established. It granted £350,000 to local projects while 12-hectares of woodland was created and four kilometres of new public footpaths establishing Mercia Park as so much more than just buildings.

Alongside all this, IM's commitment to sustainability goes much further. Not just new jobs but skills training, education outreach programmes and a host of other initiatives add depth to the full meaning of sustainable futures.

Long after the diggers leave sites, IM's legacy of sustainability will live on and lives will have been changed.



It granted £350,000 to local projects while 12-hectares of woodland was created and four kilometres of new public footpaths establishing Mercia Park as so much more than just buildings.





Energy efficiency, reducing wastage and embracing new technologies are at the heart of IM's developments. For example, Spitfire Homes now install heat pumps instead of gas boilers while solar panels, battery storage and infrared heating are being trialled at an affordablehomes development in Eckington, Worcestershire.

IM's vision is being shared and embraced with business partners and even extended to the firms and people who buy IM's homes, offices and commercial buildings.

So not just nice words, but real action and commitment. As Tim concludes: "I'm hopeful that we can deliver on this collective ambition. I'm excited to watch IMP continue to grow as an innovative industry leader – one that supports the sectors in which we operate and continues to create developments that are fit for the future."





The Bank of England had increased the base rate, and thus mortgage costs, 14 consecutive times by September and even the experts can't agree if it has peaked.

That was the bleak background to the year for IM's house builder, Spitfire Homes. Planning permission delays, spiralling interest rate rises, increasing inflation and general economic uncertainty were not the ideal background to be building and selling new homes in. By mid-year the cost of most mortgages had rocketed to the highest they had been in 15-years and inevitably house prices, for both newbuild and older houses, tumbled to 2019 levels.

Spitfire, recognised as among the Midlands premier home builders, was not immune. However, its reputation for superb quality, well chosen development sites and close attention to detail did cushion the blow.

# "...the next ten years will look very different as we continue to deliver our plans for growth."

In September it was even a time of celebration as the keys to the 1.000th home built by the company were handed over to the new owners - quite an achievement given the economic background and with Spitfire still a young company in the housing sector.

It has completed more than 50 developments and is ambitious to grow further as Spitfire is confident its high-quality approach will always attract customers seeking homes that are out of the ordinary.

Recently Spitfire bought land for new developments in key locations including Daventry (542 homes), Radcliffeon-Trent (280 homes) and Moreton-in-Marsh (250 homes) - a significant pipeline for the future.



The show home at Harrington, Tanworth-in-Arden, part of Spitfire Homes' Bespoke Collection









# "...delivering sustainable communities that our customers can enjoy for many years to come."

Ben Leather, Managing Director of Spitfire Homes, said: "It's been a fantastic decade for Spitfire and delivering our 1,000<sup>th</sup> home was a great achievement. However, this is just the beginning – the next ten years will look very different as we continue to deliver our plans for growth." The delivery of these homes has resulted in a significant investment from Spitfire into local economies creating not just new homes but supporting the employment of an estimated 3,100 people. Across the 50 developments, Spitfire has also contributed more than £18-million to local communities, supporting services such as education, transport and sports facilities, and has created 17-hectares of public open space, planted 1,700 trees and 12,000sqm of hedgerows.

Ben added: "Our focus on design and creating modern sustainable properties has enabled us to deliver homes that not only our customers, but also our colleagues and supply chain can be proud of.

"Each home we create is thoughtfully considered, delivering sustainable communities that our customers can enjoy for many years to come. I'm personally very excited for what the future holds as we look to deliver our signature homes in even more locations across the region and continue to meet rising demand by offering a Spitfire home to a wider market."

Ben Leather

(Above left): Fairmont in Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, where 90% of Phase 1 is sold. (Left): 250 homes will be built at Spitfire's Moreton-in-Marsh site.

# ISUZU & SUBARU DEALER'S CENTENARY

hey started out by selling tractors. Today, Northern Ireland's Eakin Brothers proudly sells Isuzu pickups and Subaru's as well as vans and trailers from its Londonderry premises where the family business celebrated its centenary in style!

It's a huge milestone for us," said Managing Director Peter Eakin, whose grandfather, Samuel, founded the business. "We became Isuzu dealers in 2001, which was a very successful addition to our business. Like International Motors, we are family-run. Four generations later and we still have three generations taking an active role in our business!"

Celebrations kicked off in February with a dinner for staff and partners as well as brand partners. Among the guests was Alan Able, Managing Director of Isuzu UK, who described Eakin Brothers as a key player within the Isuzu UK network. "After a century of hard work, as well as 20-plus years of Isuzu affiliation, the whole team should feel extremely proud of everything that has been achieved."



Founder Samuel Eakin's descendants running the business 100 years on. (*Left to right*): great-grandson Joel, grandson Peter, son Jack and grandson John.



ary Hutton, IM Group's hugely-respected Executive Director, has been highlighted in the 'E2E Dynamic 100' list of the UK's top privately-owned companies with a turnover in excess of £25-million. The ranking is seen as a celebration of the very best in British business. 'E2E Dynamic 100' is described as "designed to showcase the very best UK companies that are excelling." The rankings are published in association with *The Independent* newspaper.

Shalini Khemka founder of E2E said: "The E2E Dynamic100 has allowed us to highlight amazing companies, companies which despite a challenging economy and, in fact a challenging few years, have generated exceptional turnover results and continue to grow at a rapid rate."

Gary joined the IM Group in 2009 having been an advisor to the company for 25 years prior to that. In typical Gary understatement he said: "I don't know why they selected me – I just do my job."

Gary was abroad when the awards were presented at the House of Lords in September. ₪



Spitfire Homes has been named regional Housebuilder of the Year for 2023 in recognition of its outstanding quality and design.

The presentation was made at an event with some of the country's leading architects, builders and developers where Spitfire clinched the prestigious 'Insider Midlands Housebuilder of the Year' top award.

Spitfire's Managing Director, Ben Leather, said: "This is testament to Spitfire Homes' dedication to excellence and the continued delivery of quality homes." The firm's Sales Director, Matt Vincent, won the 'Emerging Property Person of the Year' title. The judges said: "This celebrates the sector's rising stars, a welldeserved recognition of Matt's achievements and dedication to the industry."

Matt has overseen more than 800 deals, worth £440-million, in his nine-years with Spitfire.

Spitfire also won an award for 'Best Use of Online Tools' voted by readers of First Time Buyer magazine. It recognises Spitfire's use of the metaverse – where buyers wear headsets and immerse themselves in fullyfurnished show homes.

# AWARDS DOUBLE FOR SPITFIRE HOMES



Ben Leather holds the award at the 'Insider Residential Property' celebrations.



# TOUGH TACKLERS – VINNIE AND HIS ISUZU

ctor and TV personality Vinnie Jones now has an ultra-tough vehicle to match his image.

He's driving an Isuzu D-Max AT35 which the 'Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels' star will be using on his new Discovery Channel countryside documentaries. Jones was a member of the famous Wimbledon FC 'Crazy Gang' during his football career. His fierce tackling was the stuff of legends but now his passions include country sports and conserving wild spaces – his AT35 will enable him to get to them.



suzu's D-Max is winning so many awards that a special extended pick-up body might have to be built!

Throughout 2023 awards came in thick and fast. In March it won the prestigious *Fleet News* 'Best All-Terrain Workhorse' award for the second consecutive year.

The judges said: "The D-Max is a true workhorse. It's robust, high quality and very reliable. But it also drives well."

Winning two-years in a row is not unusual for the D-Max. This year it scooped the *Trade Van Driver* magazine 'Best Workhorse Pick-up' title for the 11th year running! And the Arctic Trucks AT35 D-Max model was awarded the 'Best Lifestyle Pick-up' title. "We all felt the D-Max offers unrivalled levels of standard spec at a price that won't break the bank – a massive win."

The judges said: "Isuzu has won our 'Best Workhorse Pick-up' sector every year since the awards began and we had no hesitation in carrying on this unbroken record.

"We all felt the D-Max offers unrivalled levels of standard spec at a price that won't break the bank – a massive win. And when it comes to the AT35, the WOW! factor goes off the dial."

Industry magazine Business Vans gave the D-Max its 'Best Pick-up' award. *Company Car* & Van magazine did the same. Editor, Andrew Walker, said: "It's our pick-up of the year for good reasons - classleading safety, on-trend tech, and a comfortable passenger experience.

"Available in a myriad of conversions that's hard to beat and a range to suit all customers."

Yet another – D-Max won 4x4 Magazine 'Pick-up of the Year' and the D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35 won the 'Best Individual Model' award.





pivotal role was created in 2023 with the appointment of a Careers and Aspirations Specialist at Grace Foundation. Filling that role is the larger-thanlife figure, Vince Gordon. He has 32-years of working in education.

He also has 25-years of managing and coaching women's football. He's a Director of Women's Football at a grassroots club in the Midlands.

Vince then casually adds: "I've had the opportunity to have managed and coached TV football pundits Alex Scott and Karen Carney." He forgets to mention that the two rank among the best former England players.

Scott played professionally for Arsenal, Birmingham City and had 140 appearances for England before becoming a TV commentator and pundit. Carney played for Arsenal, Chelsea and Birmingham. Born in Birmingham, she had 144 England caps. Her nickname was Wizard – maybe Vince influenced that!





unky and green – GWM ORA's Funky Cat scored a 5-Star result in Europe's Green NCAP tests.

The new tests, recognised as the most stringent for environmental performance, measure three critical points – clean air quality, energy efficiency and greenhouse gases. The Funky Cat scored 10/10, 9.5/10 and 9.8/10 respectively.

With an overall rating of 97% the Funky Car easily achieved a top 5-Star rating. Notably it recorded a gridto-battery output of 93.2% when charging at 11kWh - one of the highest-ever figures achieved in the test.

Dr Aleksandar Damyanov, Green NCAP Technical Manager said: "Some of the vehicles tested clearly demonstrate the achievements made by industry in the quest for cleaner and less climate damaging cars...the high scores of the five-star Chinese newcomers show they are ready to compete for market share."

# MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

lan Hinkes likes the high life – especially above 8,000 metres, or 26,247 ft in old money.

The former Yorkshire geography and PE teacher is a member of an exclusive club – 'The Eight-Thousanders' – mountaineers who have climbed all 14 Himalayan peaks above 8,000-metres.

It took Hinkes 26 attempts during 21 years to reach the summits, with many failures on the way. Everest, K2 and Annapurna were among the highest and toughest to conquer. So, it was fitting that Hinkes put the Isuzu D-Max Arctic Trucks special AT35 Basecamp model through its paces – although the Lake District had to be the adventurer's playground.

After his trip Hinkes said: "Even in bad weather the car feels solid and secure. It cruises really well at 70mph, and the ride is excellent, not bouncy like many pick-ups. It makes you feel bomb-proof. What a brilliant piece of kit!"



IM NORDIC Helenka Fivids

# LIFE OF MANY PARTS FOR LOUISE

#### ouise Lindell has a fast-growing job at IM \_\_Nordic – providing a vital

service to car dealerships and their customers.

She was appointed Parts & Logistics Manager in January 2023 and joined the business just as the parts operation was seeing an expansion with the GWM ORA brand added to the Swedish market.

Louise relishes the task and, from her office in Arlöv, about three-miles northeast of Malmö, she can see boxes of car parts in the warehouse.



"I love working for IM Nordic," she said. "The growth of the company, now ORA has been added, means more dealer and customer demands to be met. But it's not just more challenging but also more fun. I love coming to work every day."

She's worked in the car parts business for eight-years and had worked for a Mercedes-Benz dealership in Malmö. Louise joined IM Nordic from Autoexperten, where she was a site manager looking after aftersales operations at a large warehouse. Now she's responsible for the whole IM Nordic parts business for Isuzu, Subaru and GWM ORA across six countries.

Louise is from Lund, a picturesque town in southern Sweden. She added: "When I heard about the position at IM Nordic I already knew of the great reputation that the firm has – it's not very often that people leave.

"A former manager of mine also works here and he told me what a brilliant opportunity this would be for me. He said the people



would be really welcoming, the working environment was excellent and it would be busy with new brands arriving.

"All of my expectations came true and it's so nice to come to work every day."

Away from work Louise is equally busy. She and her husband, Carl, run a business serving high-quality Italian coffee at festivals and fairs from two red Piaggio Ape three-wheelers.

To get a break from constant work the family – including Lisa the cat – like to take their caravan to a nice, quiet place in the country and simply chill!



he stars aligned when a specialist civil engineering supply company was searching for a new base.

Geosynthetics, one of Britain's leading suppliers of products used to solve the problem of stabilising ground before construction work starts, was formed 25- years ago in Hinckley. Now with a turnover of £12-million and a staff of 50, the family-run business urgently needed a new home for the fastexpanding business.

Managing Director, Tracy Woods, explained that the firm wanted to stay in the Hinckley area and also wanted premises which would reflect the firm's commitment to sustainability – so, no ordinary building would do for their new HQ.

Searching for the ideal location had been going on for some time when the firm identified IM's Hinckley Park development just off Junction 1 of the M69, two miles from Hinckley.

IM designed a 60,000 sq ft Net-Zero Ready unit, allowing Geosynthetics to bring together three divisions of the business under one roof.

Tracy said: "Local people are key to our business. When we entered discussions with IM Properties about



Harry Goodman, IM Properties, (left) with Tracy Woods and Chris Foxton from Geosynthetics.

Hinckley Park, there seemed so many synergies, we knew we had to make it happen.

"Sustainability is central to our business and all our lives. Securing an industry leading BREEAM Excellent, EPC A-rated building reflects our values and commitment to the future generations we're looking to employ.

## "It's fantastic to work in partnership to facilitate this growth opportunity for Geosynthetics"

Richard Lawrence, Development Director at IM Properties said: "We welcome the opportunity to work with a real local success story and provider of first-class employment in the area. "It's fantastic to work in partnership to facilitate this growth opportunity for Geosynthetics. It would have been a big blow to the area if they had to look further afield for a new HQ" IM GROUP Gary Buzzard

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# ZEV MANDATE BRINGS CHALLENGES FOR THE UK AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

ZEV – these three letters have had automotive industry leaders scratching their heads for a while now. And some pundits claim that one of the biggest contributors to the country's economy will suffer from it. So, what is the Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate or ZEV? It's UK government legislation which, its proponents said, would encourage drivers to change to electric vehicles. But IM's management see it as a challenge for both the

## Moving the date has just compounded the problem and the industry is caught in the middle.

company and the industry.

The aim was to force the pace at which manufacturers moved towards the target of no longer selling new diesel and petrol models by 2030. After that sales of those cars would have been banned. However, the Mandate was drawn up before Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pushed the deadline back to 2035.

There are lots of questions as to whether the move is really necessary as the shift to EVs was already gaining momentum. Moving the date has resulted in confusion with many consumers putting off the switch.

Andrew Edmiston, IM Group Managing Director, said: "Moving the date has just compounded the problem and the industry is caught in the middle."

Supporters say the Mandate is laudable. But it has a real sting in the tail – manufacturers who fail to hit the target will be fined a whopping £15,000 per car. Vans will be hit by an £18,000 charge after the first year.

ZEV was part of Boris Johnson's 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' announced in 2020. It went out to consultation but since then has been surrounded by controversy and attracted criticism from sections of the auto business.

Some experts say the industry will face additional costs of £600-million – and it only applies to the UK.

Eventually, as late as the 28th of September the Government published the Mandate that takes effect from January 2024.

Critics lambasted the delays. They point out that the industry has to make production plans years in advance. And already manufacturers were planning to have only EVs on sale by 2030 without the need for the ZEV Mandate. Some experts say the industry will face additional costs of £600-million – and it only applies to the UK.

The Mandate demands that at least 22% of manufacturer's car sales and 10% of van sales must be zero-emission from 2024. This rises each year to reach 80% for cars and 70% for vans in 2030 and 100% for both by 2035.

Firms missing the targets then face a huge fine for every single non-zero-emission vehicle they sell. While manufacturers selling only zero-emission versions will gain 'credits', which they can trade with vehicle makers who fall short of the targets.

Manufacturers like BYD and GWM ORA are way ahead of the target. Others are close. But some brands currently don't offer a single EV model. IM PROPERTIES Terrie Bostmond

# BESTRESULT ISZERO NEW ENFIELD WAREHOUSE DEMONSTRATES IM PROPERTIES' SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT

**IMReview** 

THE T

Acres 14



#### rom the site of a former London Victorian

brickworks a 'new generation' energy-efficient warehouse has emerged.

IM Properties bought the site in Enfield, North London, which prior to demolition was dilapidated premises let to The Royal Bank of Scotland, and in just 12-months completely redeveloped the site.

Now a gleaming 54.000 sq ft industrial/logistics warehouse named Edge, stands in its place. The speculative build is available to let and the prime location, just minutes from the North Circular and two miles from Junction 25 of the M25, makes it ideal for 'last mile' deliveries. More than 2-million households are within a 30-minute drive.

But it's not just the speed of the build or the fantastic design that's outstanding. What sets it apart are the zeros!

IM Properties has demonstrated its Sustainable Futures commitment through Edge. It's Net-Zero in construction and Net-Zero ready which gives occupiers the ability to achieve Net-Zero in operation. PV panels cover 7,470 sq ft of the building and can generate 127kWh of additional power offering

# "We've created a prime industrial/ logistics asset which is future proofed beyond current regulations..."

a potential energy saving of £31,000 per year. Edge has a maximum rating of EPC A+ and is rated BREEAM Excellent.

A 'green roof', tree planting and associated landscaping contribute to the overall sustainable specification and ensure a significant bio-diversity net gain over the previous development. The unit delivers six EV chargers with EV infrastructure to all remaining spaces, and sheltered bike sheds are provided to promote sustainable travel in addition to its close proximity to the London Overground. Harry Goodman, IM's Development Manager, said: "We've created a prime industrial/logistics asset which is future proofed beyond current regulations to attract occupiers who are aligned with our company's ambitions for socially-responsible growth.

"Edge will stand out as an exemplar of what the London Plan is looking to achieve for future brownfield development. Our significant investment could lead to large energy savings for future occupiers and allow them to run their businesses in the most sustainable way."



GRACE FOUNDATION Pery Craigs

# SUCCESS IS MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS

race Foundation's vital work of creating better opportunities for young people has expanded yet again – and plans for 2024 will extend it even further. Backed by financial support from the IM Group and Chairman Lord Edmiston. work to help youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds began informally in the early 2000s. The first Grace Foundation School was launched in 2006. But the real growth began in 2019.

Since then, the number of partner schools has grown to 12, meanwhile the number of youngsters and their families helped surged from around 2,500 to 12,000 engaged with every week.

In the past year alone Grace's embedded 'Ethos' teams in schools have delivered some staggering results – 650,000 student engagements, 20,000 family support interventions and more than 3,000 oneto-one mentoring sessions.



With two new schools – Q3-Great Barr, Birmingham, and the Ellowes Hall Sports College, Dudley – added in 2023 and another in the Birmingham area set to open in April, it's easy to get bogged down in the statistics of success.

Students in what had been under-performing schools have their own success stories to tell of exam results they would not have believed in before the 'Ethos' teams' arrival.

## There have been some truly remarkable stories of students... who have changed their lives around.

Yet as Operations Director, Dave Boden, points out, even this is only half the story: "Yes, educational improvements are important for a young person's future success. But their self-belief, growing confidence and maturity, nurtured by us, is even more important." There have been some truly remarkable stories of students – guided, supported and directly helped by Grace staff – who have changed their lives around. Many angry, hostile youngsters, who hated being in school, have emerged proud achievers with a strong moral compass.







# "We deliberately work in the most challenging schools because that's where we can make the most impact."

Gary Spicer, Grace Academy's Executive Director, adds yet another aspect of the work: "We deliberately work in the most challenging schools because that's where we can make the most impact.

"We don't simply concentrate on individual students from an academic point-of-view. We look at the whole person and not just that one person; we look at the whole family because they are often in need of even greater support.

"That's key to us making a difference. If we help to give the whole family some stability it's a firm foundation for building better futures for entire family units."



Gary Spicer, Executive Director at Grace Foundation



uick thinking, rapid reactions and a sheer determination to succeed are deeply embedded in the psyche of the IM Group.

Those characteristics were tested, almost to the limits, by huge challenges thrown up around the introduction of a new car brand to the UK market. "Launching an entirely new brand that no-one has ever heard of into a fast-emerging EV market of established brands was always going to be a challenge."

Everyone agreed that GWM's ORA Funky Cat was a fabulous product when negotiations to win the franchise for the brand began. It had everything going for it: beautifully-designed, wellengineered and was pureelectric in a fast-emerging market where demand for electric cars was sky-high.





(*left to right*) David Parry, General Manager, Chris Graham, Head of Network Development, Alison Aldridge, Head of Marketing, Toby Marshall, Managing Director, Michael Brick, Fleet Sales Manager, Juvaria Aslam, Sales Coordinator, Nick Gozzard, Communications Manager, and Sahar Youzbashy, Marketing Manager

A dedicated ORA sales and marketing team, led by Toby Marshall, threw themselves into preparing this exciting new car brand. Toby recalls: "Launching an entirely new brand that no-one has ever heard of into a fast-emerging EV market of established brands was always going to be a challenge. But the team was massively committed to making it a success."

Testing the market at key events proved extremely positive. Press reaction was great. Retailers and service centres were being recruited in a euphoria of highly-charged energy.

By late 2022 huge progress had been made laying the foundations for ORA.

But then a series of issues beyond the control of the ORA team started to build. Supply delays meant that GWM's product didn't really start to arrive in volume until spring 2023, by that time other manufacturers had geared-up in the war to win customers.

Despite initial brilliant Press reviews on the ORA, Toby later saw a backlash against EVs generally, with hysterical reports of cars breaking down in the rain or exaggerated fears of range anxiety.

"It was all crazy stuff," said Toby. "It just left retail customers totally confused. Plus there was no government support to encourage motorists to buy electric. Our research showed many people who had been on the verge of buying EVs then decided to postpone for another few years." Suddenly the market had changed from being considerably demand-led to being oversupplied: "It was almost a 360-degree turnaround just as we had better supplies and were building a strong brand image."

Another of IM's great strengths then became increasingly valuable – teamwork.

"We had to react really quickly if we were to sell the volume of cars we had planned," explained Toby. "But this meant plans had to be constantly re-drawn. That involved not just the ORA team but dozens of people across the IM Group.

"It was tough going back and constantly asking people to re-do all the work they had put in. But no-one complained – the teamwork support was incredible".

## "It was all crazy stuff. It just left retail customers totally confused."

GWM's European office in Munich also proved invaluable as they grew to understand the changing complexity of the UK market. Toby has highpraise for their commitment.

Re-analysis by the team resulted in re-targeting resources, from the nowstagnating retail sector to the fleet and business sectors.

Government support for EVs still exist in the fleet market, notably the fast-growing salary-sacrifice scheme as well as more-traditional areas such as leasing; so the team concentrated their energies.

"Focusing on the salarysacrifice and leasing



Chris Graham (left) and Toby Marshall





David Chesterman has been appointed GWM ORA's new Head of Sales for the UK market as the brand drives into 2024.

Previously David worked in a number of roles for Volvo Cars in the UK and brings 20-years of experience in the industry with him. His last job was as Volvo's National Fleet Operations lead - a vital area in GWM ORA's expansion plans for 2024.

Toby Marshall, GWM ORA's UK Managing Director, said: "David's wealth of automotive experience will be a fantastic asset as we build on the solid foundations laid in 2023.

"He will play a key role in delivering sales growth for the brand, enhancing our position as a leader in the e-mobility sector."

# "One week in July, enquiries outpaced the figures for the whole of the first six months."

customers suggested a great way to get ORAs onto the roads and raise awareness of our brand." said Toby. "Again. this involved more work from everyone involved. But it won us a huge increase in customers with our analysis proving right. From June we saw sales orders increase from three-a-week to in excess of 34. Metrics from our website were amazing. People requesting 'keep-in-touch' options went from around 20 per week to over 300.

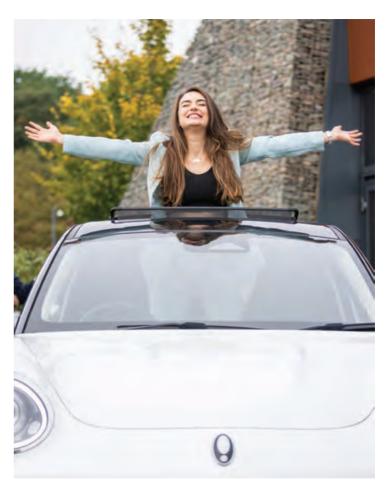
"One week in July, enquiries outpaced the figures for the whole of the first six months. It was a key turnaround, which justified our policy of constantly monitoring data, identifying areas for growth and being prepared to radically change plans." Meanwhile, by September 2023, outlets for ORA had grown to 27 across the country with full GWM ORA Hubs, new-style testdrive centres and service centres. Plus, the option to buy online went live.

"There is much more to a car brand than just sales and marketing," said Toby. "ORA has its own dedicated Sales and Marketing team, but we are supported by all the other much-needed IML group functions.

"The understanding, support and help from all of them, particularly as we were forced to change direction throughout 2023 on a number of occasions, was one of the main reasons that the brand's success went on to grow strongly."



Chris Graham, Alison Aldridge and David Parry



Sahar Youzbashy, Marketing Manager

He has almost lost count of the number of strategy changes 2023 demanded. "But now we look forward to 2024 knowing a huge amount of work has been done. None of this would have been possible without the fantastic input of colleagues from across the Group and from GWM. I have the highest praise for their professionalism – it was teamwork at its very best." After a slow start in 2022 when less than 100 cars were registered, despite all the challenges 2023 saw sales increase to almost 1,000 units. Figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders shows ORA is the fastest-growing brand in the country, and the team look forward to introducing a new model to start 2024 with a bang!

# FINANCIAE STORM

onstantly-rising interest rates, customers' financial concerns, a hugelycompetitive market and evertighter legislation – 2023 is a year Specialist Motor Finance will be glad to see the back of. Throughout this turmoil Simon Bayley, Managing Director at SMF, and his team have had to face a year of increasing challenges – and find solutions. And while the whirlpool of Bank of England base rate rises meant almost constant re-planning, the team had to calmly look at the implementation of the Financial Conduct Authority's new stringent Consumer Duty legislation. [2]

Simon Bayley, Managing Director at SMF

Dealing with the complexities of the FCA's demands required a rigorous ninemonth project. Simon, explains: "We had to review and rewrite our policies and procedures, increasing reporting and measuring to give an oversight of activities throughout the business.

"The key deliverable the FCA was looking for was actions to deliver good outcomes for customers. We achieved this by the end of the July deadline,

## "...by embedding and driving this culture of delivering good customer outcomes, we will be building a successful business for the long-term."

but we still have a lot of work to do to embed and drive the culture to deliver this consistently.

"This is key to the future of the company and by embedding and driving this culture of delivering good customer outcomes, we will be building a successful business for the long-term."

Even with a prudent policy on hedging its borrowing during 2023, SMF incurred additional overall funding costs which most of its competition didn't face.

"...we faced much stronger headwinds than we expected. Now we are a stronger business than a year ago."

Although this was the right strategy for SMF, it did impact its competitiveness in the short-term.

Simon said: "Our options were to squeeze margins to a point we were not comfortable with or restrict lending to manage margins over volume growth. We have been dynamic in managing this, with multiple pricing strategy changes and a deliberate policy to manage lending volumes. Even this creates additional challenges with managing our partnerfinding arrangements."

2023 was always going to be a year of transformation, says Simon. "But we faced much stronger headwinds than we expected. Now we are a stronger business than a year ago."

"Actions taken will enable us to grow when the time is right. A stronger management team will support the implementation of our strategy going into 2024.

"Next year we are likely to see a new norm in regard to lending rates. I don't see us returning to the low interest rates of the previous decade, but we should see stability. That will allow us to focus on our goal to deliver a stronger, customer-focused and profitable business which is scalable for the future." IM MAPS Keith Read

# SHARON TOWNSEND - A DAY IN THE LIFE

- stuck in a traffic jam! "I live near the notorious Air Balloon roundabout," explains Sharon. "Notorious for the traffic jams it causes on the A417, which I use on my journey to the office in Cirencester." And the fact that she's very much an early bird – usually in the office by 7.30am to get a lot done before the phone starts ringing – doesn't help.

very subject of this regular IM Review

feature has expressed the fact that 'no two days are the same'... But for Sharon Townsend, Head of IM MAPS, every working day starts exactly the same

## "We have a very experienced team – over 500 years' experience in fact!"

However, a £460-million road improvement scheme, scheduled to be completed in 2027, should end her daily motoring nightmare. "Fortunately, I join the queue at its mid point, so it's not as bad as it could be", she says. "When the project is completed a new road will see me on my way to the office without hold-ups!"

But once at work Sharon is like most IM people: no two days are alike. "I can certainly say I don't get bored!" she says.

IM MAPS – short for Mitsubishi Aftersales Parts and Service - was formed when Mitsubishi announced that it was ceasing car sales in Europe, including the UK and Ireland, and IM acquired the business in 2021. Sharon and her team have stayed in part of the former Mitsubishi HQ in Cirencester, where she has worked for 25 years. The former HQ was sold to private enterprise and IM MAPS rents accommodation within the sustainabilityorientated Watermoor Point office complex.

"All office waste is recycled, there is a large solar installation on the roof and a number of electric charging points. Almost half of the IM MAPS staff drive electric vehicles," says Sharon. "Lighting in communal areas is sensor-controlled with all lightbulbs being LED."

The transition from a full importer to an after-sales business has been much smoother than anticipated, says Sharon. "We have a very experienced team over 500 years' experience in fact! Processes put in place before the transition helped the team to adapt to the 'New World' and taking the dealer network with us on that journey was crucial. Bringing some of the IM Group dealers on board has been a bonus too. IM Group's automotive business works in a very similar way to us and we found many likeminded people who have been really helpful in the transition."

While IM MAPS previously covered everything to do with Mitsubishi after sales, Sharon's team now look after Customer Support for the "IM Group's automotive business works in a very similar way to us and we found many likeminded people who have been really helpful in the transition."

ORA electric car business. They are also assisting the BYD operations in this country and are looking forward to being involved in more new brands under the IM umbrella. "It's very exciting," she says.

Sharon is very much a 'people person' believing that a happy team is an efficient team. When she visits the coffee machine to fetch a round she knows exactly how each member takes their brew! In the moments when she can relax she enjoys running. She and husband of 22 years, Steve, live on a smallholding adjacent to a country park. "A complete lap of the park is exactly 5k, which is perfect for me," she says.

With two children of her own – both at university – two stepdaughters and three step-grandchildren, family life is important to Sharon. "It's an amazing gathering when we're all together!"



#### IM PROPERTIES Helenka Fivids

### THE RACE TO ZERO IM PROPERTIES REMAIN AHEAD OF THE CURVE

#### M Properties is on a 'Race to Zero' as energy creation, storage and security is becoming critical to commercial developments.

Energy has become a dilemma. Demand has grown while supplies are restricted by a number of factors – including the need for 'clean energy.'

Simon Seaton-Smith has years of experience in this area and joined IM Properties as Director of Innovation and Sustainability in 2023. He explains the complexities: "The drive towards de-carbonisation using electrification, heat pumps instead of natural gas and the growth of electric vehicles puts immense strain on the electricity network.

"But this conflicts with much higher electricity tariffs so it's challenging to transition from gas. Adding to these pressures, National Grid now says it can take up to 10-years from an application to secure new power supplies for some sites.

"Limits on capacity are set to become a huge challenge over the next 20 to 30 years as the current transmission and distribution networks need to double capacity to cope. Getting to fully Net-Zero Carbon by 2050 is the target; but the demand-versus-supply issue is resulting in what is sometimes termed 'power poverty'. It's a conundrum."

But Simon and IM are committed to finding solutions. It's central to the Group's Sustainable Futures philosophy. Simon adds: "The electricity grid is de-carbonising yearon-year and solar panels are great. But we need to move to a more embedded generation and reduce grid dependency – especially if we want to continue with buildings that demand high electricity capacities. "More electricity is being delivered from off-shore wind, large-scale PV farms and nuclear energy. Now, the benefit of integrating this with locally-generated power triggers the argument for using battery energy-storage systems. They provide a buffer at peak-load times."

IM has fully embraced sustainability but Simon says the whole issue of energy is fast-changing. "We are advancing to align with the new UK Net-Zero Carbon Buildings Standards, which will include limits on both logistics and residential properties, which are managed very differently in terms of energy and carbon.

"There is a raft of legislation coming and we are ahead of the curve. But changes will become mandatory and written into building regulations. If we don't adapt now and stay on track with the Paris Agreement, we would fail to meet our obligations under legal changes arriving in the next few months and years."

Simon admits that to the non-specialist this is complex. But he's determined, and fully-supported by IM, to drive the task forward. It includes a root-and-branch review of IM's standard specifications and revisiting materials and designs so they fully align now with these future demands.

"We want to be a business that commits to the 'Race to Zero' and be transparent in our approach. Above all, we are starting with a baseline carbon position that must be totally accurate and will drive validated reductions year-on-year.

"That way we will achieve our 2030 targets which coincide with those of the Royal Institute of British Architects." "The drive towards de-carbonisation using electrification puts immense strain on the electricity network."

Simon Seaton-Smith

INTERNATIONAL MOTORS Brian Willmow

# TIMES ARE CHANGING

Car buying habits are evolving and International Motors are here to help

### uge changes are being made to the way we buy cars

– partly as a legacy from the Covid pandemic.

Increasingly customers have the choice of as much dealer involvement in the process as they want. At the extreme end buyers could do everything online, from initial research, looking at models in-depth, selecting colours and options, finance packages to specifying a home delivery.

Part-exchange can be done digitally and some customers may even skip a test drive.

At the other end of the spectrum are traditional buyers who still want to 'touch the metal', chat to a salesman, do a deal on their old car directly and enjoy collecting their new car from the forecourt. "Omnichannel lets customers participate fully online, even down to delivery dates. We've learnt a lot from ORA. Lessons can be applied across all our brands"

William Brown, Managing Director of International Motors, said that in many ways Covid – and the restrictions its lockdowns imposed on car buying – accelerated the change in buying attitudes: "People became more confident about doing much of the work themselves," he said. "Covid became a catalyst for change.

"Many younger people are already fully-immersed in the world of digital buying. A big difference is that buying a car is a much more complex purchase than buying a book online.



"We are helping dealers to understand and adapt to these changing patterns. They need to understand and accept that many people now demand information on the cars of their choice via any device, from a phone or tablet to a computer. Many dealers completely understand. But some need to join the learning curve in order to keep pace because their competitors will certainly be doing so!"

William said that a lot had been learned from ORA, one of IM's new brands. "It came with no legacy and you can use an Omnichannel for a seamless way to purchase. "Omnichannel lets customers participate fully online, even down to delivery dates. Lessons can be applied across all our brands"

But he admits that many buyers will only want to get involved in parts of the process by 'picking and mixing'..

He added: "It could be that my children might be the first of a generation of online car buyers. We have to recognise those changed attitudes towards purchasing a new car, without frustrating customers who don't want to fully commit to that experience."



William Brown

### SHOCKANDAWESOME IN SWEDEN High hopes for IM Nordic despite Government grant cut

### hocking news threatened to spoil

IM Nordic's otherwise fantastic performance in 2023. Just a week before GWM ORA's first model was due to be launched in Sweden the Government there suddenly pulled the plug on environmental grants for electric cars.

IM Nordic Managing Director, Christer Blomdell, said: "We had just started to sell the ORA Funky Cat in three dealerships and another three were awaiting delivery when the Swedish Government gave just 24-hour's notice of the cuts.

"But with hard work we managed to sell nearly 200 cars in just 24-hours! After that sales of all EV cars stopped. Then for a while it was difficult to recruit new dealers, so we were left with a lot of stock in the spring.

Christer Blomdell

#### "With hard work we managed to sell nearly 200 cars in just 24-hours!"



"Long discussions with GWM took place for financial help and, from July, sales picked up. We're now selling about 100 a month and our market share's increasing."

Building on that success, IM Nordic will now start selling GWM ORA cars in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Christer has high hopes for GWM ORA and is really excited that his markets are expected to get six new Subaru EV models between now and 2028. Subaru has always been particularly successful in Nordic markets and the region is a leader in EV take-up. Awards success has given Christer plenty to smile about. "In 2023 we have again been awarded top positions in both dealer- and customersatisfaction surveys."

This year Sweden's car dealer association included a satisfaction survey for light commercial vehicles meaning IM Nordic scooped another top position with the Isuzu brand.

Christer added: "Isuzu had a 35% market share in 2023 and every vehicle we received was sold." This success posed one challenge – demand on predelivery checks was so high that a second shift had to be introduced at the PDI centre!

"We're now selling about 100 a month and our market share's increasing."

IM NORDIC Terrell B Moschild

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### SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS INTERNATIONAL MOTORS HELP CAR BRAND BYD WITH THEIR UK LAUNCH

YD is a car brand you've probably never heard of. But this massive company is launching in Britain with the help of IM's International Motors division.

The firm – Build Your Dreams – was only formed in 2003 and has a background as a battery manufacturer making power packs for everything from mobile phones to buses and trucks.

Since BYD started building electric cars it's had a meteoric growth in China before expanding to many countries across the world. Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway investment company quickly spotted an opportunity and took a stake in BYD in 2008.

Buffett – probably the world's richest investor – was quickly rewarded. BYD's ultra-rapid expansion meant that it overtook Tesla as the world's largest producer of electric cars – global sales exceed five-million. Now, BYD is expanding into Europe and International Motors is helping with its UK plans, which include the introduction of three new models in 2023: Atto 3, Dolphin and Seal.

IM will not hold the franchise to sell BYD models as a European HQ for BYD opened in Rotterdam and a UK in-house operation has started with BYD handling all marketing, sales and franchise operations.

INTERNATIONAL MOTORS Chris Poole

"BYD's ultra-rapid expansion meant that it overtook Tesla as the world's largest producer of electric cars..."

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International Motors Sheerness distribution site.



#### So, what does International Motors provide?

William Brown, Managing Director of International Motors, explained: "Bringing a new brand to market in a new country is hugely complex. It can take many years and really requires a lot of background knowledge and skills – something that International Motors has built up during our 40-years of operations.

"So we are doing some of the detailed background work that the lay-person never sees, but is vital to successfully launch into new markets. Our specialities include the import of cars to our Sheerness centre, pre-sale prepping of cars and all the logistics around that – plus the legal documentation.

"It's a unique partnership that has never been done before by anyone. We are charting new waters all the time with our staff at Cirencester handling the paperwork and day-today communications and Sheerness doing the physical work. "It's the kind of challenge that IM relishes and turns into a good business opportunity. BYD is taking all of the stocking and product risk with IM providing some elements of their vast know-how to the collaboration.

Interestingly, International Motors nearly missed out on working with BYD. It was invited to an event in Barcelona to bid for a contract to represent the brand in the UK, Ireland and the Nordic markets. However, the event never went ahead. But Martin Dalton, IM's Business Development Director with years of experience of working in China and excellent contacts there, stayed close to BYD. That resulted in the present business, which is fastevolving into a fruitful partnership.

With IM's rich history of car importing and distribution, the company is able to offer support and solutions to brands like BYD who wish to retain the risks associated with a new brand and products in the European market.



"Bringing a new brand to market in a new country is hugely complex. It can take many years and really requires a lot of background knowledge and skills..."

BYD ATTO 3

BYD Atto 3



IM PROPERTIES Hatty Gourn

# NEW VENTURE IN LIFE SCIENCES

"Life Science covers a broad range of developments in pharmaceutical, natural products and areas around health, among others."

"This is an extremely-highspecification warehouse capable of being occupied by advanced manufacturing companies with the need for supporting offices and laboratories."

ife sciences are opening new opportunities in the commercial property world and IM Properties has entered this fast-emerging market.

The term covers a broad range of developments in pharmaceutical, natural products and areas around health, among others. Many involve research with a number of university spin-off businesses heavily involved.

What all are looking for is specialised buildings in which to work. At the extreme end are firms requiring advanced laboratories and specialist-testing facilities.

IM's first venture is a 'Mid-Tech' building called Nova in Oxford – one of the hot spots for this new market, which IM has been monitoring for some time. Rob Hemus, IM Properties Asset Director, has immersed himself in the area and, along with UK Investment Director, John Hammond, is now closely involved.

Demand for suitable sites has been intense and land supply limited, particularly in prominent university towns and cities. But market demand is also growing quickly, with London, Birmingham, Manchester and other areas on developers' radar.

With well funded institutions looking for a piece of the action, IM had to move fast to win the Nova site, says John: "A developer with whom we had worked on other projects had secured the site. We were able to work with them to bring the development forward 'off market' without them speaking to anyone else."

Nova covers 43,573 sq ft and is due for completion in Q1 2024. It's a hybrid construction with a contemporary office-style frontage, flexible internal space alongside Grade-A office space and with room to expand. Importantly, the building will be developed to BREEAM Outstanding and EPC A+, the highest sustainability ratings possible.

John added: "This is an extremelyhigh-specification warehouse capable of being occupied by advanced manufacturing companies with the need for supporting offices and laboratories."

"Our building will typically look to house businesses on this next stage of growth."

He sees Nova as a pilot for IM in Life-Science buildings and will continue to monitor this area of business before deciding on new ventures.

Rob Hemus added: "We are excited to establish a strong presence in this dynamic and rapidly-growing sector to elevate our position as a property company investing in, and delivering, highly-sustainable and innovative buildings in the South-East." INTERNATIONAL MOTORS UK & IRELAND Brian Willmow

# INTERNATIONAL MOTORS' GROWTH PLANS



mbitious plans to grow IM's UK and Ireland business have been unveiled as the division looks to the future.

William Brown, appointed Managing Director UK and Ireland in January, has shared his enthusiasm and ambitions with all UK and Ireland employees.

IM has its roots in automotive and is highly regarded across the industry as being a smart and innovative business, quick to seize challenges and turning them into opportunities.

With the new brand – ORA – and others on the way, William has been keen to involve staff from all over the UK in his plans. "It's vital that we fully involve every member of our growing team," he said. "So I have been totally open about how I see us growing during the coming five years – and way beyond."

"I don't want to disrupt the business but I do want to broaden our ambitions. My five-year plan sees us getting to 50,000 annual sales with both our established brands and our new partners."

Not content with the existing brands International Motors represents, William hints that there are more in the pipeline. Some may come to fruition within the next 18-months. And although China is often cited as the land of opportunity, producing dozens of new brands, William says he is looking at other emerging car-manufacturing countries.

"We want to expand with new opportunities while reinforcing our great brands of Subaru and Isuzu – that's the challenge," added William. "Amongst the brands we represent we want to be recognised as the best distributor for



William Brown, Managing Director, at International Motors Live

"We want to expand with new opportunities while reinforcing our great brands..."



Tom Stone, Digital Director

the countries in which we operate."

In July, William outlined his plans at 'International Motors Live' held at The Gate with all parts of the business in the UK and Ireland attending. All 10 members of International Motors' management team gave presentations introducing themselves, outlining what they do and highlighting their plans for the future.

William concluded that his vision was for International Motors to be 'the best in the business' across the board, including for value, service and achieving targets. But he added that the firm had to be the best employer in the sector with investments in wellbeing and other employment programmes well underway.

"We want to be known as one of the best companies to work for; our staff to be the most satisfied employees and that we attract the best talent. We have a great culture, and fantastic people – this is the best foundation from which to grow our business. CHRISTIAN VISION Darcie Timstone

# LEVERAGING DATA FOR CV'S MISSION

#### hristian Vision (CV) is using data in

remarkable ways to connect with people globally in their own languages. Since introducing its first five-year impact plan in 2020, CV has expanded its focus from using only major global languages to engaging with people groups all over the world in a wider array of languages.

A 2023 map of CV's language landscape showed that its teams and partners operate in 119 languages, and its content reaches more than a million individuals daily in 53 languages. Further data insights underscored the untapped opportunities, suggesting that expanding CV's language capabilities is one of the keys to rapidly scaling its mission. Considering more than 4,700 people groups are speaking in excess of 1,500 unique languages, the potential is vast.

One of CV's high-impact efforts in this regard is a custom-built translation tool that also serves as a data repository. By storing, reusing, and optimising humanchecked translations, the tool has already improved consistency and efficiency in creating content in diverse languages in its first year.

This strategic software has also laid the groundwork for future endeavours by providing an expansive and specialised database to help CV harness the power of large language models for translations, especially for lesser-known languages. Heinz Oldewage, Managing Director of Christian Vision, said, "In our efforts to connect more meaningfully with diverse communities, we are focused on innovative and scalable approaches."

As CV begins the groundwork for its next impact plan, it aims to extend its reach by using more languages while leveraging technology and partnerships.

Andy Bridge, Manager of Direct, CV, said, "While many in the world are multilingual, there's a stronger emotional connection to whichever is one's heart language. By reaching people in that language, we're not only sharing our message but truly connecting with them. It's a powerful and effective way to further our mission."



# FUTURE IN FOCUS

ou don't have to spend too much time around our management here at IM Group, before you discover that their view of the immediate future is what is called in stock-market parlance, 'Bearish' rather than 'Bullish'. In other words, we are in a defensive frame of mind. There is an article printed in this year's review with the three members of our senior board discussing the economy. The tone is not one of confidence that the year ahead will be plain sailing.

But did we ever feel it would always be? One of the key things characterising our high performance over nearly fifty years, is that we have lived through many time periods where resolve, grit, clear thinking, determination, care and vision are required. This is simply another one.

That is not to say we will in any way disrespect or be casual about the challenges facing British and European markets and industry. Small prospect of the interest rates falling sharply in 2024 means that our property business will certainly be in for another year of being careful, biding our time, preparing to adjust our business to take advantage of opportunities when they arrive rather than pressing on with confidence to take advantage of the favourable conditions in front of us. No doubt, those times will come again. So much of business success is doing the right thing at the right time. My father often said the maxim that property is about three things – location, location, location – is in fact incorrect. If you get the timing wrong, even the best properties lose value. So timing, or doing the right thing at the right time, is much more important. Next year seems to look positive for our automotive business again, despite some challenging new legislation in the UK and the ongoing drive towards EVs across Europe that provides both opportunity and a headache! It's fantastic to have different businesses in the group. Currently, the automotive and property businesses are somewhat counter-cyclical. As interest rates rise, so the value of the pound, especially against the yen, has been in our favour. Our finance business too, has some characteristics that mean under certain circumstances we can do well even if the economy is difficult.

We remain positive about all three areas we compete in. They all face different problems, but together they all blend to form a strong group of complementary activities that we have become good at over the years. We are far from perfect and I can always see things for us to work on - so you can be sure we'll be doing that. But though we remain in a more defensive mood for the time being, we are acutely aware of the need to prepare the company to take hold of opportunities that we already know of, and others that we know will come.

Andrew Edmiston





Every division of the IM Group now has sustainability as a core element. It's a theme that's integrated and growing, making a meaningful contribution to corporate harmony.

This Spitfire Homes property illustrates the point

Behind the handsome architecture is a raft of sustainability features such as an air-source heat pump. And Spitfire's aim is that all of their new homes, like this one, will be built to net-zero-ready standards by 2030. Meanwhile, IM's automotive business is already well down the environmentally-friendly route with all GWM ORA models like the one in the driveway being pure electric.

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